



State of Arizona
Department of Education

TO: *Special Education Directors*

FROM: **Joan McDonald**, Deputy Associate Superintendent, Exceptional Student Services (ESS)
Leila Williams Ph.D., Director of Alternate Assessments
Audra Ahumada, AIMS A Coordinator
Patricia Reynolds, Assessing students with Disabilities and PD Specialist

SUBJECT: AIMS A UPDATES and Focus Group Participation Opportunity

Jan. 31 –
Feb. 15, 2012

The AIMS A online system closed on January 31, 2012 at midnight and we have begun to mail materials to all teachers/test administrators who entered all AIMS A eligible students into the Common Logon Alternate Assessment Application. Any students who were not entered into the Common Logon Alternate Assessment Application on or before January 31, 2012 can be added beginning February 15 when the application opens for the test window. If you have students who still need to be entered, please do the following:

- Contact Audra Ahumada (Audra.Ahumada@azed.gov or AssessingSWDs@azed.gov) as soon as possible notifying her of the students who will need to be entered (SAIS, DOB & Gender).
- Enter students beginning February 15 – March 31, 2012.
- If additional test materials are needed for the students added, they will be sent FedEx or delivered to the Special Education Director.

Feb. 6-14, 2012

Performance Task test materials will be mailed directly to Special Education Directors unless we were told specifically by the Director to send to the AIMS A designee or some other location. A signature is required upon arrival for tracking purposes. Please be aware of the delivery.

Upon Arrival of PERFORMANCE TASK MATERIALS:

- Review inventory list included in the packages and SAVE the return postage paid label. You will use this to send the test materials back to us once the testing window closes.
- Disseminate test materials to all staff listed on the inventory list (ensure that they get the number of grade level packets indicated for each of the content areas).

Feb. 15-
Mar. 31, 2012

AIMS A testing window – ***Only trained staff may administer AIMS A*** to eligible students during school hours. Teachers/Test administrators will still need to download individual student data sheets located on the front page of the AIMS A application. Student results for the Performance Task items can be entered into the online system at any time as long as the actual items were administered to students during school hours.

Review test security agreement with staff as necessary to ensure that there are no test violations that would invalidate the test (*i.e., copying materials – uploading materials to a virtual classroom setting is considered copying and would result in a violation*).

If teachers need additional training on administering the Performance Task, please remind them to review the training video on the IDEAL Website under AIMS for Educators-Resources.

Finally, our state Department of Education is part of a collaborative research group that is studying ways to improve state assessments for English Language Learners with disabilities. One of our project partners, the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO), is conducting an online focus group study about the state assessment participation and accommodations for K-12 English Language Learners with disabilities.

Fifty educators and assessment coordinators from our state will be given the opportunity to participate in an online focus group and to share their experiences and challenges regarding state assessment decision-making for these students. Based on these focus group results, NCEO will work with our state department to develop an online educator training module about how to support English Language Learners with disabilities for state assessments.

We believe this is a terrific opportunity and we'd like to encourage you and any ESL/Bilingual Education teacher, Special Education teacher, paraprofessional, or speech-language pathologist who has worked with English Language Learners with disabilities, or a state assessment coordinator in your district to read the attached information letter about the online focus groups. The information letter describes how to contact NCEO [*Linda Goldstone, University of Minnesota, gold240@umn.edu*] to volunteer to be part of the study. You have unique expertise and important insights into ways to improve the assessment experience for these students.

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and it will be anonymous. We hope you will seriously consider taking part, as the information we will gain about the needs of students and opportunities to support teachers in making good assessment decisions for this group will be invaluable. NCEO tells us that a focus group will take approximately 3 hours over one week, which can be completed anytime convenient to your schedule. All you need is a computer with internet access. **Participants will receive a \$100 Target gift certificate for their time.**

Thank you for taking time to share this information with the appropriate staff.